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KING'S CHAPEL BURIAL-GROUND.

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH,

Boston, March 6, 1879.

"To the City Council of Boston:—

"GENTLEMEN,—The Board of Health respectfully reports that the public health requires that future interments in each and all the tombs in King's Chapel burial-ground be prohibited. Said tombs are numbered from one to twenty-three, inclusive, in the front portion of said ground, and from one to twenty-four, inclusive, in the rear, and from one to thirty-two, inclusive, in the interior portion of the same.

"The names of the past and present owners of said tombs, so far as we know, are hereto annexed.

"S. H. DURGIN, *Chairman.*"

(Then follows a long list of names.)

"CITY OF BOSTON, April 12, 1879.

"Agreeably to the provisions of Chapter 182 of the Acts of 1877, notice is hereby given to the owners of the tombs described in the foregoing report of the Board of Health, to appear before the special committee of the City Council, appointed for that purpose, on Tuesday the twenty-second day of July next, at 3 o'clock, P.M., at the City Hall, Boston, and show cause, if any they have, why each and all of said tombs in the King's Chapel burial-ground should not be closed against any future interment therein.

"S. F. McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*"

The members of the Board of Health are:—

Dr. S. H. DURGIN, *Chairman*,
Hon. A. W. BOARDMAN,
Mr. J. M. KEITH.

The Special Committee on Interments, to whom this subject was referred, are:—

Aldermen J. A. TUCKER, *Chairman*,
" J. S. ROBINSON,
Councilmen J. J. BARRY,
" GEO. H. WYMAN,
" GEO. T. PERKINS.

A first meeting of the committee was held on the twenty-second day of July last, and an adjourned meeting will be held at City Hall, Thursday, September 4, 1879, at 2 o'clock P.M., at which all parties may be heard.



SOME EXTRACTS FROM RECENT REPORTS OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

P. 9, 1875. "The propriety of closing several of the cemeteries in the city proper against any further burials has been considered, and we fully believe that the time has arrived when no further interments should be made in the following grounds, viz.: King's Chapel, Granary, Copp's Hill, and Central. Others might be given, but these require more immediate action. The work of finding and notifying the various proprietors according to law, before closing, is somewhat formidable, and has been the cause of some delay; but this work is being forwarded as fast as possible. The dilapidated condition of the tombs, monuments, and head-stones, and the dangerous walks which are now constantly breaking through into tombs in the Granary and Chapel grounds, have suggested the question as to whether the city would not do well to make an arrangement with the proprietors by which the remains may be removed and deposited elsewhere in grounds equally desirable for cemetery purposes.

"As it is, a large outlay of money is required annually for the purpose of making the necessary repairs, while the general decayed and unsafe appearance of things renders the grounds neither ornamental nor creditable to the city.

"We have mentioned this question of removal to several of the older proprietors, and in every instance the response was decided and favorable for removal."

P. 15, 1876. "The cemeteries and burial-grounds in charge of this Board are a continuous and yearly increasing expense to the city. Many of the fences are old and dilapidated, requiring large repairs. The walls have been affected more or less by the frost, and portions of them have already been relaid. The high wall of the Copp's Hill cemetery has been considerably thrown out of line, and will soon require relaying. The monuments are crumbling away, and must, in the course of a few years, be replaced or removed altogether. Many of the tombs have fallen in, exposing their contents, and have been repaired at the expense of the city, in consequence of the difficulty of finding the proprietors.

"If these tombs are to be kept in good condition, they should be filled up with earth and closed against further burials. Every year has lessened the number of those who feel an interest in these tombs. Only so much money has been expended by the Board upon these grounds as was absolutely necessary to keep them in decent condition.

"The work of ascertaining the names of the proprietors is progressing slowly, in consequence of the difficulty of tracing the proprietorship from deficient and imperfect records.

"The Board, as time elapses, is still more convinced that it would be for the best interest of the proprietors and the city to have the contents of these grounds, lying in the city proper, removed to some cemetery without the limits, or remote from the centre of the city, and the grounds utilized for some other purpose."

P. 17, 1877. "The cemeteries under the charge of this Board



contain about thirty-seven and one-half ($37\frac{1}{2}$) acres of land, (1,634,892 sq. ft.) divided as follows, viz.:—

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Boston proper, King's Chapel cemetery | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 19,200 sq. ft. |
| “ Granary “ | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 81,900 “ |
| | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |

“ It has been the aim of this Board to expend as little money as possible upon these grounds, and at the same time keep them in a creditable condition.

“ The time is fast approaching, however, when a much larger yearly expenditure will be required for repairs on walls, fences, monuments, etc., which are fast going to decay. We believe the time has already arrived when the cemeteries within the city proper should be closed against further burials, not only as a sanitary measure, *but with the view of eventually removing the remains of the bodies which have been buried therein to some more suitable locality in the suburbs.*

“ The following estimate of the value of the lands in the Chapel and Granary grounds is estimated upon the valuation of land in their vicinity:—

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Value of Chapel ground | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | \$300,000 00 |
| Value of Granary grounds | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 900,000 00 |
| Total | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | \$1,200,000 00 |

“ *If they could be sold at this valuation, or taken by the city for public use, say for the extension of City Hall or a Court-House, the amount would purchase a larger tract of land in some outlying district or neighboring town, put it in proper condition, and still leave a surplus, the income of which would, if properly invested, be more than amply sufficient to keep the grounds perpetually in order.*

“ Sooner or later (it may not be in this or the next generation), the remains of those buried in these cemeteries will be removed, and the ground will be used for other purposes.

“ There can be no better time for such a movement than when some of the descendants of those who were buried therein are living, and can see that the removal is properly accomplished.”

The report of 1878, p. 23 and 24, repeats the same remarks, and quotes the law of 1877 on the subject.

“ An Act to Amend Chapter 28 of the General Statutes, above quoted, in respect to closing tombs in cities, was passed in 1877, the material part of which reads as follows:—

“ SECTION 1. The City Council of any city may, upon report of the Board of Health thereof that the public health requires it, and after public notice and hearing in the manner hereinafter provided, forbid future interment in any tomb or tombs within the city limits.

“ SECT. 2. The report of the Board of Health above mentioned shall specify the tomb or tombs to which its action refers, and

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name the owner or owners thereof, if the same be known; and thereupon," etc.

SECT. 3 provides for the repair of any tomb by the owner or the Board of Health, and if the city shall incur any expense in regard to any tomb, said tomb shall be held and no further use of it made, until, etc.

The report then continues:—

"Complaints have been made to the Board in a few instances of interments in private tombs under churches in the central part of the city, asking the action of the Board to prohibit such interments.

"But while the Board is fully convinced that such interments are injurious, and, as a sanitary measure, ought not to be permitted, still in any given case inquiry always discloses such a divided sentiment among the owners of the tombs and the worshippers in such churches, as to the fact whether interments there have become prejudicial to the public health, — some maintaining the affirmative and others as stoutly asserting the contrary, — that it is very doubtful whether the jury by whom the question would ultimately have to be decided would sustain the action of the Board of Health and City Council in prohibiting such interments. While almost all intelligent men are willing to assent to the abstract proposition, that interments in populous places are injurious, the moment that any interference with private property is recommended as a means of carrying such proposition into effect, the hostility of the owners is instantly aroused; and unless a strong case of necessity can be made out, such interference will not be sanctioned by the tribunal of final resort."

Every one who knows anything of the condition of the King's Chapel Burying-ground will see at once that these statements do not relate to that cemetery.

The argument against "interments in populous places" seems to have no bearing on the plan to destroy an Old Historical burying-place that has existed from the first settlement of the country, and is used no more than this is.

FROM CITY REGISTRAR'S RECORDS.

Original interments in, and removal of bodies from other places to tombs in King's Chapel burying-ground during the five years from 1874 to 1878 inclusive:—

| | 1874. | 1875. | 1876. | 1877. | 1878. | In 5 years. |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| Interments, | 2 | 2 | 1 | None | 4 | 9 |
| Removals, | 3 | 2 | 1 | None | 2 | 8 |
| Total, | 5 | 4 | 2 | None | 6 | 17 |

The next meeting of the Committee will be held at City Hall, Thursday, September 4, 1879, at 2 o'clock P.M., at which meeting all persons interested will be heard.

Boston, ~~Sept.~~ 18, 1879.

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